

## THEOLOGY AND RELIGION.

It is common, in these days, to emphasize the distinction between theology and religion, and to set a higher value upon the latter than the former. The recent statement of an eminent religious leader was probably correct, when he said that "the active Christians of this country think more and more of religion, and less and less of dogmatic theology." It may be, that there is a tendency, for the time being, to discriminate unduly and unjustly against theology. We are of the opinion, however, that no serious danger is to be apprehended from any such tendency. Theology rests on a strong and enduring basis; it always has maintained, and always will maintain, its ground. It is a great necessity; and, in its proper place and under its proper character, it is as salutary as it is inevitable. Theological study and theological training will always continue to perform, as they have done from the beginning, a beneficial function in the development of Christianity.

What is important to observe, is, that the distinction in question is a real and valid one, and that the tendency to lay more stress upon religion than upon theology is substantially correct. If it is true that men are caring more for religion and less for dogmatic theology, this is probably to be regarded as a favorable, and not an unfavorable, sign of the times. It does not necessarily imply doctrinal error, laxity of belief, or indifference to truth; it probably only indicates that men are learning to exercise a just discrimination and to set things in right relation to each other.

Religion is greater than theology, as the cause is greater than the effect, as that which includes is larger than that which is included. It is the parent of theology; it carries in itself the power of producing an indefinite number of theological systems. Destroy theology, and you have done nothing; other theologies will grow out of the same fruitful source. Destroy religion, and you have destroyed both religion and theology together.

Theology is subordinate, because it is of the intellect, while religion is of the heart, using the word in that profound and pregnant sense in which it is used in God's Word. We know well that there can be no sound and trustworthy theology, with the production of which the heart has not had its part to perform, along with the head. *Pectus est quod theologum facit*, was the motto of one of the greatest theologians. Yet, unquestionably, theology is of necessity primarily and predominantly concerned with the intellectual apprehension of truth, with the statement,

explanation and setting forth in logical order of the great doctrines of the Christian religion. This is its glory; but this, also, is the badge of its inferiority. It is of the intellect, while religion is of the heart and will. It stands for knowing; religion stands for loving and obeying. Of these two, it is not difficult to decide which is the greater. Philosophy tells us that the end of life is not a thought, but an action; and the New Testament proclaims the truth that loving is higher than knowing.

Theology is for the few, while religion is for all. The one depends in large measure on intellectual qualifications, confined of necessity to a small number of persons; the other depends on moral and spiritual qualifications, capable of being possessed by all. It is a great and comforting truth that as, according to the saying of Goethe, one may live in a house without being an architect, so one may be a Christian without being a theologian. This is no disparagement of either architecture or theology, both of which are noble and beneficent sciences; but it does indicate that the great matter of human habitation and shelter, whether material or spiritual, does not absolutely depend upon the one or the other. Things take rank according to their commonness, and not their rareness; they are great in proportion as they are universal and indispensable. Every man may live in a house though very few may be architects; every man may see, though only the mathematician may be acquainted with the science of optics. What habitation is to architecture, what eyesight is to the science of optics, that, in some true sense, religion is to theology.

About all theology there is something provisional; it is for the time being. Every theological system exists *ad interim*; however excellent, it is but a temporary structure, intended to last until one more adequate may be provided. For it belongs to the idea of theology that it is an attempt (a necessary, inevitable and beneficent attempt) to address in words what may not be perfectly and absolutely, but only imperfectly and relatively, so expressed; to explain, in terms addressed to the human intellect, things which are too vast and deep to be wholly, and which may be only partially and approximately, apprehended and explained in that manner. And so, every theological system is for a time; it is the best that can be done under the circumstances; it will serve a useful purpose just in the proportion in which it succeeds in giving expression to the great and inexpressible truth. But it will have its day; time will change it; when it has served its purpose, it will be

superseded by another system, more adequate and satisfactory, but, in its turn, of the same provisional character.

With religion it is different; there is nothing provisional about it; it is no more provisional than the sun, moon and stars are. It is permanent, after the manner of "seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night." Lapse of time cannot affect it; change of circumstances cannot render it obsolete. It belongs to the eternities. For it consists, primarily, not in intellectual apprehension, but in reverence and worship, in faith in God, in love and obedience to Jesus Christ. The essence of it is, not knowledge, but love, that everlasting and indestructible thing, which according to St. Paul, shall "abide," when prophecies shall "fail," and tongues shall "cease," and knowledge shall "vanish away."

These are some of the differences between theology and religion, and some of the reasons why it is to religion that the priority and superiority belong. If, therefore, it is found to be a characteristic of the times that men are caring less for theology and more for religion, this may perhaps be regarded as a not altogether inauspicious omen. No small injury has sometimes been wrought, by exalting theology above religion; perhaps some good may result from exalting religion above theology.

## THE SECRET OF HARD TIMES.

Not long ago six hundred immigrants came from Ireland to America, being aided by the government to leave the old country. On the voyage over it was stated that these six hundred poverty-stricken immigrants drank *five thousand bottles of ale*.

The great need of people who are distressed and troubled and filled with complainings, is not so much that they may have more money, as they may know what to do with the money they have. It is impossible for any class of men to earn money enough to support their families and support the rum-shops too. No advance of wages will ever satisfy the dram-seller. The thing needed is a thorough reformation; a turning to God, and truth, and righteousness, and then men will forsake the paths of vice and sin, and will have plenty instead of poverty, blessing instead of cursing, peace instead of wretchedness, and calm content instead of restlessness and uneasiness. Is it not time for men to turn their feet into the testimonies of the Lord, and take heed to their ways, and find the peace and blessedness that comes to that people whose God is the Lord?